

Jonah Special School

School for Children with Autism & Complex Needs

OLD V.E.C. BUILDING, SLIEVERUE, KILKENNY, VIA WATERFORD

www.jonahschool.ie

Tel/Fax: 051-833269 Email: thejonahproject@hotmail.com

Roll Number – 20380B

Principal: Caitriona Barry

Director: Niamh McEvoy BCBA



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Attendance Policy Jonah Special School

Introduction

The Jonah Special School's attendance policy aims to promote and encourage regular attendance among our children and to convey the importance of good attendance at school.

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy can be summarised as follows –

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our students learning.
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998.
- The role of the NEWB.
- Levels of disadvantage.
- Changing attitudes to education.

Aims and Objectives

The revised policy is geared towards –

- Ensuring that students are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Ensuring that student attendance is recorded daily.
- Encouraging full attendance where possible.
- Identifying students at risk.
- Promoting a positive learning environment.
- Enabling learning opportunities to be availed of.
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- Fostering an appreciation of learning.
- Identify students at risk of leaving school early.
- Ensuring compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation.
- Developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- Identifying and removing, in so far as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

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Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teacher's record individual patterns of attendance and the School Principal make returns to NEWB. The Principal has responsibility for maintaining the Leabhair Tinreamh.

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Punctuality

School begins at 9.30 a.m. All students, teachers and special needs assistants are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of students being consistently late without good reason. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late to the Education Welfare Board.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

The school attendance of individual students is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily in the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). The annual attendance of each individual student is recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register), together with information provided in enrolment forms (Student's Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents' Names and Parents' Occupations).

If a student does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, his/her non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher. The roll call is taken at 10 a.m. each morning. Any student not present will be marked absent for the day. The roll book may not be altered once it has been filled in. Correspondence from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such correspondence will be retained by the class teacher. Late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the class teacher.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Students whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal during Parent/Teacher meetings and are informed of the school's concerns.

The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a student is removed from the school register and where a student is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more.

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by –

- Creating a safe and welcoming environment.
- Ensuring children are happy.
- Displaying kindness, compassion and understanding.
- Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early.

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National Education Welfare Board

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if –

- A child is expelled.
- A child is suspended.
- A child has missed more than 20 days.

The NEWB is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

Jonah Special School endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our students and their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all students.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant so that 'risk' students are identified early. Risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without correspondence of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a letter, email or phone call when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the Principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and a reminder is published in September. It is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.

Parents/guardians are informed if a child has no lunch, and if one cannot be provided for him/her, the school will provide a sandwich and a drink.

The question of equality of access is addressed through the school's policy on Equal Opportunity and Gender Equity.

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that 'the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day'.

Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent on more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

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In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child's parents and the Principal of the school) may serve a 'School Attendance Notice' on any parent who he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the EWB five times during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted – not more than six weeks following the end of the school year – detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.

Transfer to Another School

Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal of a child's current school must notify the Principal of the child's previous school that the child is now registered in their school.

When a Principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she must notify the Principal of the student's new school of any problems in relation to attendance at the student's former school and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate. This applies to students who transfer between primary schools and to students who transfer from primary to second-level education.

Communication

The school has developed a good relationship with the local Education Welfare Board (EWB) personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for students as easy as possible.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from Jonah Special School to another school, the school's records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer.
- When a child transfers into Jonah Special School confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Students transferring from Jonah Special School to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

Communication with Parents

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is disseminated by regular school circulars. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by –

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- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notifying the School if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- Working with the School and Education Welfare Service to resolve any attendance problems.
- Making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance.
- Discussing planned absences with the school.
- Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time.
- Showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
- Encouraging them to participate in school activities.
- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements.
- Instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
- Informing the school of the reasons for absence from school.
- Ensuring, in so far as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
- Notifying the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through –

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Leabhar Rolla records and statistical returns.
- Happy confident well adjusted children.
- Positive parental feedback.
- Teacher vigilance.

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Attendance Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Jonah Special School at its meeting held on:

Ratified by the Jonah Board of Management on: _____
Date

Signed: _____
Principal

Signed: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Next Review Period: *November 2023*